

Norway
grants

A Digital Era with a Human Face

Guidebook for Journalists



Team of Authors

pragueskills
CENTRE FOR MEDIA

This guidebook is part of the project [Promoting Human Rights in the Digital Era](#) (LP-HRMGSA-017), implemented from January 2022 to January 2024 thanks to support from the Human Rights Programme funded by [Norway Grants](#) for the 2014-2021 period.



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Please send your feedback and comments on the guidebook to projects@praguemediaskills.org and projekt@iure.org.

A staggering 84.4 % of respondents who work in Czech media believe that technology companies collect far more information about people than they publicly declare.

(Source: [Journalists and modern technology](#) Research Project)

“I’m only 71 years old and I struggle with it. My sister is 85 and she’s out of the loop completely. I think that as senior citizens we should have the same rights as everyone else.”

(Research participant in [Technology and digitalisation: How do I fight with/against it? How does it limit me?](#) 2022)

29 % of a sample of 620 media workers (primarily journalists as well as professionals in tech, sales and advertising) believe that creating content for and about people with disabilities should be the responsibility of public service media.

(Source: [Journalists and modern technology](#) Research Project)

“All websites should be accessible to all population segments. The visually impaired should have the option to zoom in and out, informational videos should feature Czech sign language for the hearing impaired. Of course, in practice only some websites offer these features, but they really should be available everywhere.”

(Deaf sign language user, participant in the study [Technology and digitalisation: How does it benefit me and how does it limit me?](#))

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1. Introduction

Dear future and present journalists,

What you have before you is a guidebook entitled “A Digital Era with a Human Face”, which is designed to help media professionals (not only journalists but also spokespersons and communication experts) to obtain a deeper understanding of the impact that modern technology and digitalisation have on society and individuals, namely in the context of human rights.

The aim of this publication is to present the impact of modern technology and digitalisation from a number of different angles. Our diverse team of authors has come together in an effort to cover the following aspects:

- A look at the journalist and his/her work, areas in which technology has ushered in considerable changes and challenges (e.g., in the chapters on cyber security and the use of Creative Commons licenses);
- The rising use of modern technology and algorithms in newsrooms and in the media (specifically in the chapters by Alžběta Solarczyk Krausova);
- A broader context for the societal impact of digitalisation and technological innovations, primarily concerning vulnerable or digitally excluded individuals and groups who are also the focus of the organizations luRe and PCMS.

The aim of this guidebook is not to serve as an exhaustive explication of this ever-evolving topic, but rather to use real-life examples to identify where the biggest risks lie and which fundamental human rights can be (and unfortunately are) violated in our digital world. At the same time, this text offers up guiding principles and proposes suggestions and concrete measures for mitigating and avoiding negative outcomes.

This guidebook draws on unique data obtained from qualitative and quantitative research conducted as part of the project [A Digital Era with a Human Face \(LP-HRMGSA-017\)](#) for the period between January 2022 and January 2024 with support from the [Norway Grants](#) 2014-2021. This research project, which is the first of its kind in the Czech Republic, has revealed the need to raise awareness and knowledge among media professionals regarding the impact of modern technologies and digitalisation on human rights, including but not limited to negative outcomes.

In addition to the proposed measures, this guidebook seeks to provide resources and contacts for obtaining further expert information. This guide is the joint effort of a multi-disciplinary team, offering up potentially contrasting perspectives, and also includes contributions from members of digitally excluded groups as well as the visually and hearing impaired and media professionals.

We sincerely thank them for their contribution and you, the reader, for any comments or feedback you may have for us.

Adriana Dergam, Guidebook Coordinator.

2. A Digital Era with a Human Face

We live in a digital world

Digital and other modern technologies are increasingly influencing everyday life in today's society, from industry and services to government administration and science, education and human relations to media and communication. We can scarcely even imagine our private and professional lives without these technologies. On the one hand, they make our lives easier when it comes to things like shopping and travelling, improving coordination, connecting us with our loved ones but also with the rest of the world, streamlining financial processes, and giving our voices and creations a much broader platform. On the other hand, these technologies also pose significant risks to many of our fundamental rights, including our right to privacy, freedom of expression, personal security, human dignity and freedom from discrimination, among others.



A brief list of the human rights most often affected by technological advancements and digitalisation, including examples, can be downloaded from the Human Rights and Modern Technology Committee of the Human Rights Council website (in Czech).

From human rights to journalism and back

Journalism and human rights are key elements when it comes to upholding a democratic system. A crucial (albeit not the only) prerequisite for consistently maintaining a high journalistic standard is the assured respect for human rights, such as freedom of expression and opinion and the right to investigate and receive information. Journalists act as intermediaries between the public and the fulfilment of their rights: the first of which is the right to information – among others.

At the same time, the media plays a crucial role in the functioning of the rule of law and democracy: it informs public opinion, disseminates facts of interest, and exposes human rights violations, such as discrimination and corruption. The rule of law is one of the fundamental pillars of democratic society. Where the rule of law ends, human rights end along with it.



Key resources to consult...
[Universal Declaration of Human Rights \(1948\)](#)
[European Convention on Human Rights \(1970–2021\)](#)
[Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms \(1992–2021\)](#)

Nevertheless, the protection of human rights is more challenging than ever in our dynamically changing world which is undergoing rapid digitalisation. We need to ensure that the digital revolution serves the people and not the other way around. This requires constant vigilance in detecting and assessing gaps in the protection of human rights and bolstering support and powers for preventing human rights violations. This guidebook seeks to help journalists and the news media, often dubbed the “watchdogs of democracy”, to better identify and report on the risks of digitalisation and technology.

If journalists fail to understand the complexities of human rights and the workings of modern technology, important aspects of today’s reality will be lacking in the news media along with its ability to steer public debate towards pressing social issues.

Guiding principles

Each chapter offers up recommendations targeted at specific issues. However, it is generally advised that authors consider the following when reporting on digitalisation and modern technology or in the application of these technologies in media production:

There are two sides to every coin

Digitalisation and modern technology have certain advantages (speed, broad scope, efficiency, streamlining etc.), but also disadvantages (inaccessibility for certain individuals and communities, human rights violations, such as the right to privacy and dignity etc.).

Is it really for everyone?

Digitalisation and modern technology should be accessible and beneficial to all (regardless of age, user needs, skills, and disabilities).

It must not be mandatory

The law maintains that individuals must have access to non-digital solutions (for example when applying for social benefits, communicating with authorities etc.).

3. Protection of Privacy and Personal Data



At the end of March 2023, Italy banned the use of the popular generative artificial intelligence program ChatGPT, developed by the American organization OpenAI. The reason was concern regarding the processing of personal user data. In March, there was a data leak that included not only user conversations with ChatGPT, but also payment information. At the same time, the Italian Data Protection Authority pointed out that there was no legal basis to justify “the mass collection and storage of personal data for the purpose of ‘training’ the algorithms underlying the operation of the platform.” The Italian Data Protection Authority also mentioned that since there was no way to verify the age of users, the app “exposes minors to absolutely unsuitable answers compared to their degree of development and awareness.”

(Source: [BBC – ChatGPT banned in Italy over privacy concerns](#))



The use of artificial intelligence systems that can automatically create quality content is on the rise. The boom of generative AI started when the ChatGPT application became available to the broad public. It is a large language model built using machine learning techniques based on large quantities of text. Datasets for training large language models (LLMs) are mainly obtained via web scraping, i.e., using a robot that systematically crawls through publicly available websites and collects information from

them. However, this information can take a variety of forms and may include not only copyrighted content, but also personal and often sensitive personal data.

A number of stakeholders have responded to privacy protection issues related to LLMs. The American Congress namely highlighted issues related to especially the issues related to the sharing of sensitive data and the use of this data for the subsequent training of LLMs. There have been suggestions that AI applications should require the user's consent and notify users about data processing, give them the option to opt out of the collection of their personal data, or give them the option to delete their data from the system ([Generative Artificial Intelligence and Data Privacy: A Primer](#)). The issue of personal data processing by generative AI has also been addressed by the G7, which is developing a code of conduct for generative AI in cooperation with the EU ([G7 data protection authorities point to key concerns on generative AI](#)). The European Parliament responded to the issue of LLMs by amending the draft of the Artificial Intelligence Act and adding new requirements for these models. Moreover, the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) also applies when it comes to the protection of privacy and personal data.



In general, generative AI raises a number of questions and risks. In relation to privacy protection, the main concerns are:

data leaks, insufficient anonymization of personal data, unauthorized data sharing, potential prejudice (bias) and discrimination, failure to provide consent to processing, lack of transparency regarding data processing, and the violation of principles regarding the period of retention and deletion of personal data.

(Source: [Generative AI and Data Privacy](#)).

In order to effectively mitigate these problems, the providers of generative AI systems should deploy practices such as:

- transparent rules and documents regarding the processing of personal data,
- the use of reliable anonymization techniques,
- the implementation of technical solutions to provide users with a high degree of control over their own data.

However, in order for generative AI to operate safely, users themselves must act diligently, as their conduct influences AI systems in their own way through the processing and sharing of personal data.

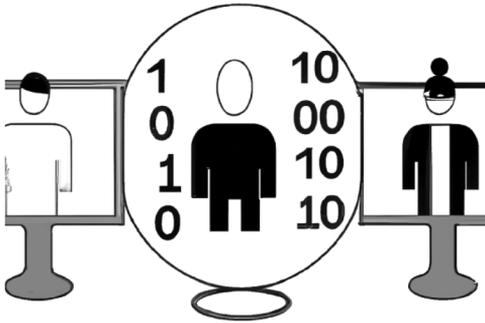


Recommendations

Privacy protection is very important in journalistic work. Therefore, the following should be kept in mind when using generative AI systems:

- Journalists should use technology responsibly. Therefore, they should always first find out which generative AI system is most suitable for their work and familiarize themselves with the principles of data processing. Some language models do not use input data for further learning and provide higher guarantees than other systems.
- Journalists should protect their own privacy and the privacy of their subjects. It is therefore advisable that journalists carefully consider what information they are willing to share with generative AI. Ideally, no personal data should be entered into such systems. The systems should only be used for general purposes.
- Journalists should familiarize themselves with the different privacy protection settings in the system they are using. In some systems, learning from uploaded texts can be disabled, as can chat history. However, even if it is prohibited to save the user's history, there may still be some risks – for example, ChatGPT retains data for 30 days for potential review by developers.
- Journalists should be aware that generative AI systems are not able to process personal data correctly. Their primary function is to predict the most likely following word, meaning that automatically generated personal data may be false or misleading. Such data should be always checked.

4. Algorithmization and Personalization



Research from 2022 shows that 44% of Czech newsroom workers do not know whether the website of the newsroom they work for personalizes the content provided to users based on the data they collect about user behavior. At the same time, 27% of workers know that their website works in such a manner, but only 13% of them would be able to explain how content is personalized. 29% of workers say that the personalization of content on their newsroom's website does not occur at all, the reason being either insufficient technical capacity or the lack of willingness to use the technology.

Media websites that personalize content primarily use analytics that assess the preferences of users with similar behavioral profiles and interests (59%). Only 15% of websites ask users about their interests and preferences directly.

(Source: Research [Journalists and Modern Technologies](#), in Czech)



Personalization has become a commonplace technology in online media. In essence, it can be described as individual content suggestions based on algorithms and intelligent data analysis. Its main goal is to maintain the reader's interest, which the technology does by showing readers articles relevant to their interests. On the one hand, this technology serves the reader by offering more relevant content, as the algorithms filter out what the user is not interested in. On the other hand, over time, algorithms can end up showing the reader only one-sided articles or opinions, creating an information bubble, which contributes to a rather limited worldview. In this manner, algorithms can thus also reinforce confirmation bias.



“Confirmation bias is a person’s tendency to prioritize (prefer, favor) information that confirms their own opinion or belief and to underestimate information that contradicts their opinion or belief. It is the tendency to distort even ambiguous information as if it were in line with one’s personal opinion or belief.”

Prof. PhDr. Rudolf Kohoutek, CSc., Dictionary of Foreign Terms (in Czech)

Although information bubbles and confirmation bias create a larger comfort zone for users, they do not allow them to understand the world in a more comprehensive way. Ultimately, this practice contributes to an individual’s greater susceptibility to misinformation. Like-minded people mutually confirm their worldview based on limited access to information. By receiving similar information, they stop questioning and thinking critically about it. Instead, they are quick to reject information that does not fit into the logic of the world they built using information from their own bubble (**Artificial intelligence: media and information literacy, human rights and freedom of expression**).

This situation seriously threatens the right to freedom of expression and the right to access to information and jeopardizes the possibility of balanced democratic societal debates. It is therefore necessary to use algorithmization and personalization in such a way that bolsters rather than suppresses these rights, while at the same time respecting the individual’s personal autonomy.



Recommendations

The world we live in is highly algorithmized and much of the information we receive is personalized. Therefore, each of us lives in an information bubble. As this has become a rather common way of life, the vast majority of us are unaware of this reality. It is particularly important for journalists to remind themselves of the need to seek objective truth and avoid the trap of information bubbles. In this context, it is essential that journalists understand the technical workings of algorithmization and personalization and continue to hone their critical thinking.

The mission of journalists is not only to facilitate freedom of expression, but also to ensure that readers of their online media can efficiently exercise the right to information. Therefore, journalists should prevent the effects of personalization by familiarizing themselves with the relevant technical settings and striving to deliver content to readers in a more balanced way.

5. Secure Communication



“The Ministry of Justice has apologized to Janek Kroupa, a reporter from the Czech Radio, for the illegal wiretapping of his phone during the Pandur case... The police set up the wiretaps to determine where the journalist obtained the protocol concerning the case of lobbyist Marek Dalik and the Pandur armoured personnel carriers.”

(ČT24, in Czech, 2.8.2019)

“...This case targeted our Hungarian colleagues, journalists Szabolcs Panyi and Andras Szabo from Direkt36. The Pegasus spyware program gave the Hungarian government under Viktor Orbán access to their encrypted messages and article drafts. Direkt36 is one of the few independent media outlets left in Hungary...”

(Pavla Holcová, [Government surveillance of journalists, activists and dissidents using spyware](#), in Czech, Investigation 18. 7. 2021)

“This cyberattack on Czech Radio was a very targeted and sophisticated effort, according to the radio station’s management the hackers must have planned the attack in great detail... The hackers destroyed and encrypted data as well as backups of one of the radio’s external suppliers in two of the company’s data storage locations.”

(Jana Magdoňová, [Czech Radio-Radiožurnál](#), in Czech, 24. 6. 2023)



Cybersecurity has become an absolutely indispensable requirement for the media and journalists. Negligence on this front can lead to professional failures, such as source leaks, as well as the loss of important data, and can even cripple entire media operations. In more extreme cases, the health and life of the journalist or their source may even be jeopardized.

Who is the target?

Media	The media depend on digital communication – both in terms of conducting their work and as a tool for reaching the public. They thus find themselves under threat from the people whose stories they cover as well as cyberespionage groups.
Journalists	Attacks on the computers and telephones of journalists are a fairly simple tool for obtaining highly valuable data about their work and personal lives, which can in turn be used against them.
News Contacts and Sources, Whistleblowers	News sources are an at-risk group of people who face considerable danger if their identity is exposed. It is primarily the journalist's responsibility to ensure that communication with their source is secured from the outset so as to minimize any potential risks.

Risk assessment or what is being protected and from what?

What needs protecting? (the informant's identity, sensitive editorial correspondence, drafts, leaked government documents...)

From whom? (influential corporations or political parties, criminal groups, secret services...)

What resources does or can the attacker have? (private eye, hired hacker, government-funded surveillance apparatus...)

How likely is an attack? (Are the documents really that sensitive?)

What functional and effective methods of protection can be used? (taking into account costs, willingness of the media company to invest)



Recommendations

1. Securing your computer and telephone

All electronic devices that a journalist uses for their work should comply with basic security parameters in order to prevent the data stored on these devices from being lost or leaked. These security measures namely include:

- a) Performing regular updates (especially important when protecting against malware) and not using devices that have not been updated;
- b) Encrypting content stored directly on the device (this is now a standard setting but it is worth double checking);
- c) Backing up encrypted content onto an external drive or to the cloud.

2. Securing online accounts

Journalists often communicate by e-mail and social media. If an attacker gains access to any such account, the information obtained can be used to discredit, spy on, threaten, or steal the identity of the journalist. The attacker can pose as the journalist in order to lure more information from news sources. The journalist also faces the very real risk of becoming cyberbullied or stalked. The journalist should thus pay special attention to the following organisational and technical measures to mitigate the above risks:

- a) Limiting personal information and circle of friends on social media, considering the use of a pseudonymous account;
- b) Setting up multiple logins, if possible;
- c) Not using the same password across different accounts;
- d) Using a secure password manager (e.g., [1Password](#)) which allows for the realistic use of long, complex passwords.

3) Secure communication

Confidential communication, namely between the journalist and their source (but also between the editorial staff), is a critical factor that underpins the success of (primarily) investigative journalists. While the standard communication tool is telephone or e-mail, the use of alternative channels, such as WhatsApp, Messenger and Signal, is on the rise. The following factors in particular should be taken into account when selecting a communication tool:

- a) The use of communication tools that offer **end-to-end encryption**. This refers to a type of encryption which only allows the sender and recipient access to the content. From this perspective, standard phone calls or e-mails without additional encryption are not the best options. What is more, all of the metadata from telecommunications and e-mail is stored for security purposes in the context of *data retention*. End-to-end encryption can instead be found on communication tools such as Signal, Whats-App and Threema.
- b) In addition to the protection of content, one must also consider **metadata**, that is, information about who communicated with whom and when. This information alone is enough to prove that a source has been collaborating with a journalist and as such can be severely damaging. It is precisely the amount of stored metadata that sets apart the two most widely used communication platforms, What-sApp and Signal, with Signal retaining significantly less metadata.

When selecting the most appropriate communication platform, one can refer to this security overview of the most commonly used communication tools published by the Czech [National Cyber and Information Security Agency \(NÚKIB\)](#).

6. Creative Commons Licenses and their Application in Journalism



Today, journalists and publishers are often faced with the issue of where to obtain illustrative images, ideally in a manner that is quick, legal, and free. This is one of the reasons behind the emergence of the public licensing system called Creative Commons, which makes it easy to connect copyright providers (in this case image creators) with users (journalists, publishers). When looking for content licensed under CC licenses, [CC Search](#) is a good place to start.

However, licenses can also work the other way around, as a useful tool for the non-commercial distribution of copyrighted content created by journalists. It is particularly useful for journalists or periodicals striving to maximize the audience for their original articles, videos etc., or to draw new visitors or subscribers to their website.

Creators of licensed content looking for a guide in Czech can refer to the website of [Creative Commons](#), which allows the author of the work to choose the relevant Creative Commons license according to their interest and to generate an icon or html code to be used on the author's website.

How does it all work?

The author takes a photograph or otherwise creates an image, though it can also be a text, video, or other type of copyrighted work. The author chooses to make the work freely accessible and selects one of six possible Creative Commons licenses. The author publishes the work together with the license either on a specialized website dedicated to such licensed content or on the author's own website or social media. The user finds the licensed work and uses it accordingly in their own work (for example as a stock image in a news article or background music for a news video). In this case, the author does not need to be contacted or even informed of such use.

What do different licenses mean?

Those who use Creative Commons licenses express their consent to their work being freely distributed. In terms of further conditions, the author can choose from six different types of licenses. These are indicated using a combination of letters or icons.

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The BY license authorizes others to distribute, modify, improve and create other works based on the original work, including for commercial use, provided that **the author of the original work is credited along with the original title of the work**. This license is the most lenient and is recommended for maximum reach and use of the licensed material.

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7. Digital Exclusion and the Digital Divide



“There are still three quarters of a million Czechs who have not yet set up a mandatory databox – either because they consider it unnecessary or lack the technical skills. These people will run into problems with bureaucracy.”

(Aktualně.cz, [Hundreds of thousands of citizens still without mandatory databox, risking bureaucracy issues down the line](#), in Czech, 6.6. 2023)

“I’ve had issues with the digital world for about 10 years now. I’ve also been to an office where about three clerks were talking to an elderly woman trying to explain to her how to find some address, to just look it up online. There were about three clerks there and not a single one of them thought to look it up on their own screen and print it out for her. So, it’s really sad. I’m only 71 years old and I struggle with it. My sister is 85 and she’s out of the loop completely. I think that as senior citizens we should have the same rights as everyone else. Just like people in wheelchairs aren’t able to run, we’re not able to operate this stuff properly.”

(Milan, 71 years old, Qualitative Research [Technology and digitalisation: How does it benefit me and hoe does it limit me?](#), in Czech, Focus group 2, 18.3. 2022)

“Non-business individuals should not be forced to use digital services or to perform digital tasks according to this law.”

(12/2020, [Section 14 of the Czech Digital Services Act](#))



The technological transformation and digitalisation of the public and private sphere has come up against the problem of unequal access to technology as well as the issue of competence and willingness to use technology. Technology in this sense namely refers to computers, smart phones and the internet, but also things like payment cards and internet banking.

Those who, for various reasons, do not use such technologies at all or only in a limited capacity, have become victims of digital exclusion. Digital exclusion is often a consequence of social exclusion, though it can also work the other way around. Much like social exclusion, it can have a major negative impact on one's fundamental rights. This namely refers to the right to receive or share information and can also extend to the discrimination of certain groups who often face digital exclusion (e.g., senior citizens and the socially vulnerable). Discrimination then consists of poor or entirely lacking access to certain services.



“The digitally excluded and vulnerable cannot be generalized as senior citizens from small villages. The digitally excluded include segments of the population characterized by poverty and alienation or negative experiences with the internet. The digitally vulnerable who use the internet for unproductive activities includes young manual workers, the aging middle class, as well as population segments whose barriers include lack of time (parents) and a passive lifestyle (excessive television watching).”

(Segmentation and typology of the digitally excluded and those at risk of digital exclusion – secondary analysis, in Czech, 2019, p. 9)

The digitally excluded may include, for example:

- Senior citizens who have never learned how to use the internet or a smart phone.
- Adolescents who only use digital technology for entertainment.
- Single mothers who do not have the means to purchase electronic devices nor to pay for an internet subscription (e.g., for remote education).
- Debtors in foreclosure who do not have their own bank account or payment card.
- Technology experts who refuse to use a certain technology or device because they disapprove of the company's privacy policy.
- The visually impaired who cannot use technologies that are not adapted to meet their needs.
- Independent farmers living in towns with no mobile phone reception and a poor internet connection.



Recommendations

Very often, the problem of digital exclusion is treated as a temporary issue that can be remedied by increasing access to technology and people's ability to use it. In reality, however, 10-20% of the population will always be digitally excluded for a number of reasons. Paradoxically, the lower the number of digitally excluded individuals, the worse off they will be when it comes to digital exclusion, as there will be less incentive to preserve non-digital solutions to various life situations (face-to-face communication with authorities instead of online forms, cash versus card payments, loyalty cards instead of applications, print newspapers, radio and television versus news websites etc.).

An individual's aptitude for digital technology tends to decline with age. The things we were once able to do are no longer possible. What is more, the technologies themselves are also changing. Those who can operate a smart phone with ease today can find themselves digitally excluded in just a few years if they are unable to use certain newly developed AI tools.

A journalist's ability to reflect on the phenomenon of digital exclusion is absolutely crucial when it comes to gaining insight into the perspectives and interests of this non-homogenous, hard-to-define, and often "invisible" group of people and their exclusion from society.

The media's reflection on this issue highly informs people's opinions in both the public and private sphere in terms of preserving alternative solutions for specific obstacles that the digitally excluded may face. The preservation of these alternatives, together with the removal of barriers to technology access, are the key to protecting the fundamental human rights of the digitally excluded.

An example of preserving a non-digital alternative	An example of an exclusively "digital" solution
In response to the fight against inflation, parents can apply online for government support in the amount of 5 000 CZK per child. For those who, for whatever reason, cannot or choose not to, an application can be submitted in person at any Czech Point location.	Applications for government support for Ukrainian refugees can only be submitted online as of July 2023. However, some are unable to file electronic applications, for example if they are unable to use modern technology or if their disability prevents them from doing so, or if a system error prevents them from setting up an electronic identity.

8. Technology and People with Disabilities



“I can’t write, read, or even eat on my own. Communicating with my family, who live 150 kilometres from the institution where I live, was very difficult until my friends from the Silou hlasu (Power of Voice) organization gave me the opportunity to contact my family using a voice-controlled computer. (...). My life took a completely different turn. The possibility to communicate freely. Together with voice control for using my phone or operating the television, I suddenly became equal to everyone else in terms of being able to make contact with anyone and at any time.”

(Alfred Strejček, [Stories of our clients at Silouhlasu.cz](#) and [ČT24](#), in Czech, abridged)



People like Alfred Strejček are often subjected to violations of their rights, including isolation from information, violence, abuse, stigma, and prejudice because of their disability. In turn, this can lead to discrimination in their social lives, education, healthcare and social services, as well as in the job market and related endeavours, amongst others.

Any one of us can become “disabled”, whether temporarily as the result of injury or illness, or when the situation does not allow for the individual to fully realize their potential, whether in a sensory, mental, or motor capacity.

HEAR



Deaf



Ear infection



Bartender

Source: [Inclusive 101 Guidebook](#)

Our ability to use technology depends largely on our sight, hearing, touch and speech. The presumption that all of these senses and abilities are fully active at all times and in all situations is a misguided one.

Approximately 10 % of the Czech population has a permanent disability ([Czech Statistical Office, 2019](#)), with one fifth of this population comprising senior citizens over the age of 65 ([Czech Statistical Office, 2019, 2022](#)). The number of individuals with temporary or situational disabilities is even higher.

Senior citizens and people with disabilities have the same rights and needs as anyone else. They want to live in the comfort of their own homes, achieve personal growth, seek out education and employment opportunities, and be self-reliant individuals. In this regard, they can benefit from digital and other modern technologies that are increasingly impacting everyday life in modern society. Such technology often compensates for the affected organ or ability and becomes a kind of proxy “eye” or “ear” ([UN, 2022](#)).



What are [compensatory aids](#) and [assistive devices](#)?

Nevertheless, here we must also take into account the potential risks that such technologies can pose.

Benefits	Risks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Social and economic inclusion – Making advancements in healthcare and targeted solutions – Individualized care – Better access to education and integration in the job market – Access to information, including information on health and safety – Effective crisis management – Cultural enrichment and civic engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Social and economic exclusion (if digital devices are unavailable or the necessary skills are lacking) – Invasion of privacy and breach of confidentiality – Lack of access to certain parts of the infosphere – Cyberattacks – Disinformation and manipulation – Automated decision-making by unsuitable algorithms



Recommendations

When using technology as an information and communication tool or when reporting on technology and digitalisation, journalists should be mindful of whether these technologies are adequately developed, used, and regulated in a manner that does not endanger human rights but rather helps to fulfil, advance and protect them.

This means, for example, that:

- The technology in question takes into account impaired vision, hearing, mobility, dexterity etc. and its design is **accessible and inclusive**.
- Actors responsible for the entire lifecycle of the technology, i.e., from the design, development, implementation of the technology and the data it uses, including data processing, storage, transmission and disposal, are aware of the impact of these processes and routinely assess whether they are in violation of the human rights of people with disabilities and a wide range of user needs. These key actors include:
 - Developers and creators
 - Operators and service providers
 - System guarantors and regulators
 - End users (individual and collective)

- The media plays a hand in informing and raising awareness about:

a) people with disabilities

“If it could be somehow incorporated in the first or second grade so that children could learn about different types of disabilities, so that people with disabilities could grow up in a society that is inclusive and that understands their needs. This would go hand in hand with educating people on how the disabled should be treated.”

(research participant in [Technology and digitalisation: How does it benefit me and how does it limit me?](#), in Czech)

b) the enhanced capabilities of standard technologies and awareness of specific technologies

Many technologies for people with permanent or temporary disabilities, whether sensory, mental or otherwise physical in nature, are available in most mainstream operating systems, both on mobile and desktop devices. Increasing awareness and informing the public about these options, whether via the primary school system or the media, can bolster the use of these technologies, including but not limited to the senior population.

What is more, every year new technologies emerge that seek to better meet the needs of people with disabilities. [INSPO](#), the country’s largest conference on information and communication technologies for people with disabilities, serves as an annual showcase of such innovations. Up-to-date information on the latest technological innovations in this area can also be found via umbrella organizations for people with specific disabilities.

c) the risks



When producing media content on the topic of technology and digitalisation or in the application of technology, journalists should ask themselves the following questions:

- Is privacy and the confidential nature of the information being respected? How is user data being handled?
- Is equal access being facilitated? Can everyone use the technology or does it lend itself to discrimination?
- Is freedom of expression being negatively impacted? Can everyone in the target group express themselves freely?
- Can the result or output be accessed via non-digital means? Not everyone has the access, skillset or incentive to use modern technology or digitalisation.

9. Accessibility: Content for All



“99 % of deaf people are faced with communication barriers in texts. We don’t understand...the ministry, websites, it’s a foreign language to us. The Czech language is a foreign language to us, the deaf community doesn’t understand it, relying on social services, parents, family members, who can speak Czech as a deaf person? We depend on the hearing, websites are really a nightmare, there aren’t any subtitles and there’s no interpretation using sign language.”

(Czech sign language user, 29 years old, respondent for the project [Digital Era with a Human Face](#), in Czech)



Accessible spaces – both physical and virtual – are a crucial first step towards equality. If people with disabilities do not have access to transportation, shops, parks, websites etc., they are not free to make their own decisions and take control of their lives.

(European Commission, [Equality Union: Disability rights strategy for 2021-2030](#))

All people, including the disabled, are equal in their rights and have the right to be protected from discrimination. The Czech Republic has enacted [Act No. 99/2019 Coll.](#) (in Czech), on the Accessibility of Websites and Mobile Applications, designed to ensure access to websites and mobile applications of public administration bodies and other entities specified in the Act, namely for individuals with disabilities. Moreover, according to the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms as well as [Act No. 155/1998 Coll.](#), on Communication Systems for the Hearing and Visually Impaired, among others, the deaf have the right to obtain information in their native language – in this case, in Czech Sign Language (CSL).

However, public administration bodies themselves often fail to comply with these laws, which journalists should consider an important topic that is deserving of attention and coverage. This issue extends to a large portion of the media, whose content is not accessible to people with a broad spectrum of user needs, profiles and abilities, including people with disabilities. The design of online media as readable for the visually impaired and the interpretation of media content into CSL is largely lacking in most of the Czech Republic's media.



Accessibility

In the broadest sense of the word, this refers to the use of products, services and spaces and access to information without barriers and for all. Accessibility can help people with permanent and temporary disabilities, e.g., people in wheelchairs, parents with prams, the blind, a patient recovering from eye surgery etc.

(designprovsechny.cz, in Czech)

The lack of access to certain kinds of information can further exacerbate the existing social and economic divide and thus threaten some of our fundamental human rights, such as the right to health. This emerged as a pressing issue during the COVID-19 pandemic, where websites of government institutions and the media served as key sources of information in this society-wide health crisis. This form of informational discrimination was also reflected in the social exclusion, isolation and restricted access to other basic services, thereby undermining, for example, the right to education for people with disabilities.



Recommendations

In order to eliminate violations of the rights of people with disabilities and special needs, the digital sphere (but not only) must be made more accessible and barrier-free. Adapting communication and media outputs (including websites) for people with visual and hearing impairment (accessible design, sign language interpretation, etc.) will not only facilitate their integration into society and protect their fundamental rights, but will also increase the consumer base and target audience of the media provider.

How to get started? Although the needs and possibilities of every individual (disabled or not) are very different, the first step towards making the media and digital communication more accessible involves assessing the current state of affairs and identifying the most obvious barriers. User-friendly guides can be found in the articles [How to perform a simple accessibility audit](#) and [Testing website accessibility](#). Further steps can be taken for example with the help of an accessibility expert from one of the umbrella organizations for people with disabilities ([SONS](#) [Czech Blind United, in Czech] for the visually impaired, [ASNEP](#) [Association of Organisations of the Deaf, the Hard of Hearing and Their Friends, in Czech] for the hearing impaired etc.).

10. No End: Lifelong Learning for Journalists



*“We find ourselves at a historical crossroads, where the fundamental **right to a future** is threatened by the pervasive digital architecture of behaviour modification, owned and operated by surveillance capital, enforced by its economic imperatives and governed by its laws of motion, all in the interest of guaranteed outcomes.”*

*(Shoshana Zuboff, *Age of Surveillance Capitalism*, 2022)*

*“Journalism cannot be separated from network society – **it is fully embedded in network structures** and their dynamics. (...) Digital journalism has, without a doubt, radically transformed many aspects, namely news practices, audience engagement, the impact of social media trends on the selection of news stories, distribution, and access to news.”*

*(Silvio Waisbord, *Continuities and Breaks in Digital Journalism and Media Systems*, 2023)*

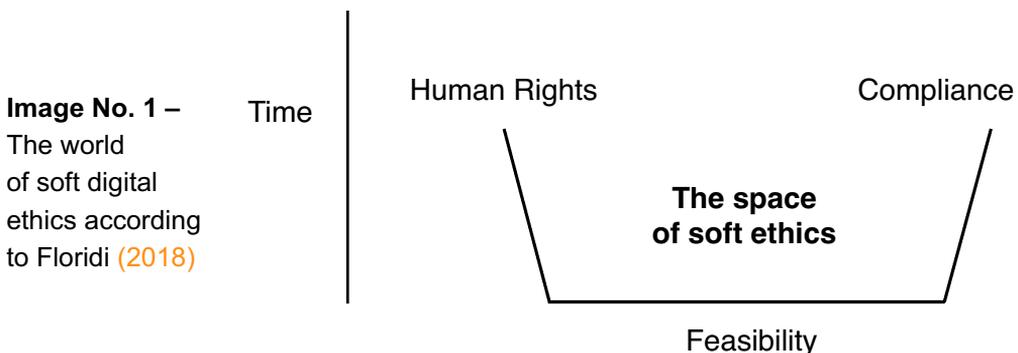
*“In many ways, the future is happening now, and people should not waver in their effort to grasp the **rapidly transforming human-computer interface** and its impact and implications for journalism and news media.”*

*(John Pavlik, *Collaborating with ChatGPT...*, 2023)*

The digital revolution, which includes internetization but also extends to the emergence of artificial intelligence in social communication, helmed by the media, is causing a shift in our opinions in terms of our values and priorities, what constitutes correct and responsible behaviour in the digital ecosystem, and even which types of innovations are deemed more socially favourable. Luciano Floridi (2018), philosopher of computer science and information technology, points out that the **real challenge is no longer digital innovation, but rather the governance of digital technology**. This is evidenced by the plethora of initiatives that target the impact of digital technology on people’s everyday lives and the regulation of such technologies. The limits to our understanding of the digital revolution, including its implications for different human rights, is generally rooted in a limited understanding of how digital technologies work.

Digital ethics can help eliminate such “blind spots”. Digital ethics can be understood as a branch of applied ethics that studies and assesses moral issues related to data and information (including generation, recording, processing, distribution and use), algorithms (including artificial intelligence, machine learning and robots) and related practices and infrastructures (including responsible innovation, programming, hacking, professional codes and standards). Digital ethics informs digital regulation (both external and internal) and digital governance through moral evaluation.

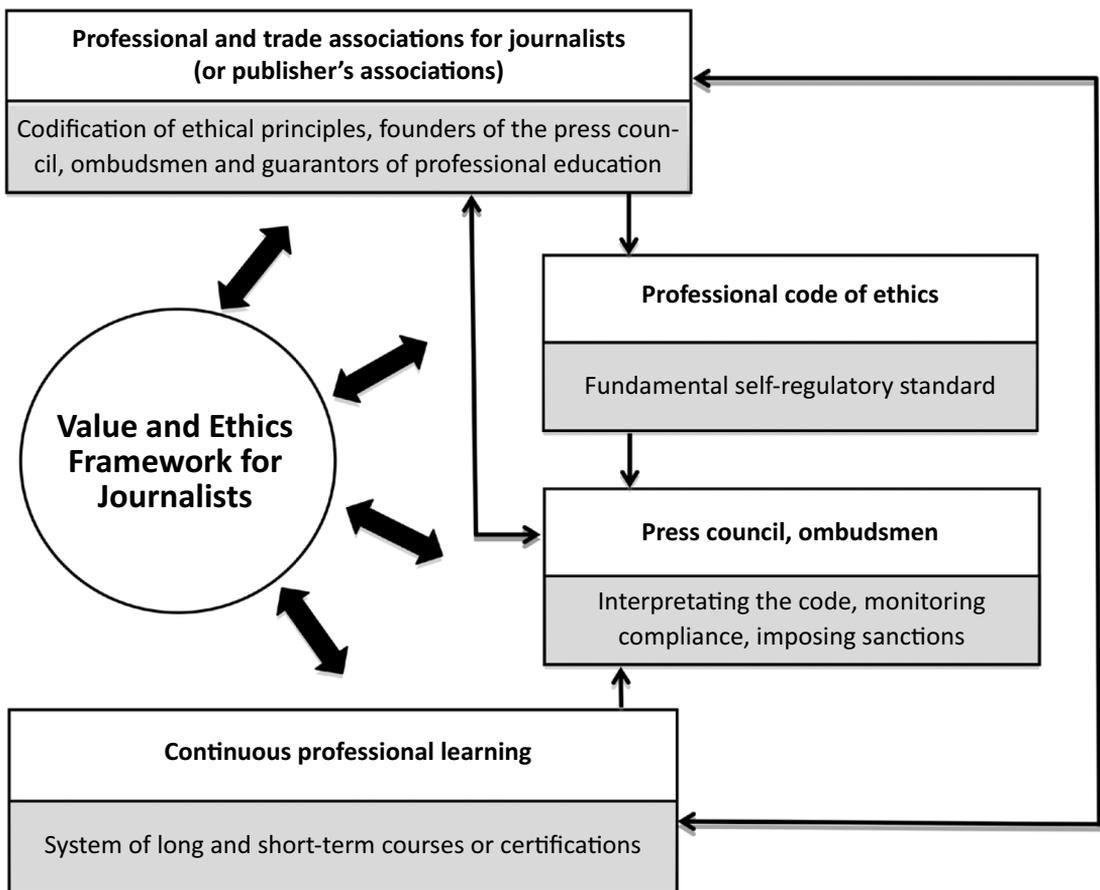
Luciano Floridi distinguishes between two types of digital ethics: hard and soft. **Hard digital ethics** refers to the consideration of values, rights, obligations and responsibilities – or generally speaking, what is morally right and wrong and what we should and should not do – when formulating new regulations or when debating existing regulations. In other words, hard digital ethics is what creates or shapes legislation. Alternatively, it can also be called external digital ethics. **Soft digital ethics** then covers the same ground as hard ethics, though it involves the deliberation over what is right and wrong beyond the scope of existing regulation and not against or despite it (for example, in the context of self-regulation). In other words, soft digital ethics refers to ethics once the legal requirements have been met. We can picture it as a trapezoid (see Image No.1), where the bottom side represents a feasibility base that is constantly expanding over time.



The two limiting sides of the trapezoid represent compliance with legal regulations and human rights. The open top side then represents space for morally permissible conduct.

Soft digital ethics also includes **the ethics of journalism**, an integral component of which is **continuous professional learning for journalists**. The lack of such developments leads not only to a solely formal approach to the self-regulation of the journalistic field, but also breeds stagnation in other areas of internal journalistic ethics (see Image No. 2). The growth and development of journalists, both present and future, prompts innovation in codes of ethics and editorial guidelines, expands the purview of editorial ombudsmen and redefines the individual value systems of journalists in relation to digital technology and their governance.

Image No. 2 – Main forms of self-regulation in journalism according to Moravec (2021)



The advent of generative artificial intelligence, spearheaded by ChatGPT, bolstered continuous professional learning in this area for the staff of some of the Czech Republic's news media in 2023 (for example, the management of the national news agency ČTK distributes employee newsletters titled “Novinky z AI pro Četkaře (AI News for CTK Employees)”) and also led to innovations in professional codes and editorial guidelines (i.e., new editorial regulations for working with artificial intelligence were not only adopted by ČTK, but also [Czech Radio](#) and [Seznam News](#)).

For example, the **Seznam News Editorial Guidelines for Working with AI** explicitly state: *“AI tools are and will be used all over the world in a myriad of ways. Attackers can use neural networks to generate false information or doctored photos and videos. **Editors are continuously educating themselves so they can better identify such content.**”*

However, continuous professional learning in many of the country's newsrooms remains rather underdeveloped due to insufficient budgets, a consequence of the faltering economic models characteristic of these forms of media in the wake of internetization and artificial intelligence.

Selected passages from the new ČTK, Czech Radio and Seznam News editorial guidelines on the application of artificial intelligence in media outputs

*“With the right commands, AI tools can help speed up prep work, improve content, and stylistically reword or condense texts. If AI is used for such purposes, the factual accuracy of the resulting text must always be double checked; **As they currently stand, AI tools are not a reliable source of information** and are thus not suitable for conducting research as such. If they are used for research, **every fact must be cross-checked with a different source**; Responsibility for news content cannot be transferred to AI, as it remains in the realm of human responsibility (author/editor and management) ...”*

(Principles for the use of AI tools in CTK's editorial practices, April 2023)

“Speech synthesis is a new phenomenon that has gained significant traction in the public sphere. This technological tool has long been used in different types of call centres and similar services, though it is increasingly being used for content output. It is now often used for the automated audio processing of online texts, though we are also seeing more frequent applications for the generation of other audio outputs. Speech synthesis is also being used for live radio broadcasts. Czech Radio would like to explore speech synthesis in the context of innovation and multimedialization in order to identify technological possibilities, content opportunities and to navigate

the legislative and organizational implications. (...) If any of Czech Radio's broadcasts or digital services make use of speech synthesis, listeners and users must be made explicitly aware of such use..."

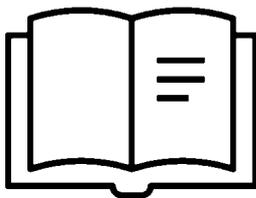
(Guidelines for the Czech Radio when working with synthetic speech, July 2023)

*"AI tools are only used to streamline prep work and to refine or otherwise improve the quality of original content. Editorial outputs are thus **always the responsibility of the individual** (author, editor and management). No responsibility can be transferred to AI on principle. It follows that whenever we use AI, no matter the context, we must always be able to take **full responsibility for the published result**. The reader then knows that there is a real person behind every article."*

(Editorial guidelines for working with AI, Seznam News, April 2023)

In the wake of the digital revolution, university and tertiary education can play a significant role in continuous professional learning, or rather, in returning moral authority from software and computer experts back to journalists. A good example here is the **Journalism AI** initiative led by The London School of Economics and Political Science.

11. Appendices



References and Sources

Journalism

- [Code of Ethics of Journalists](#) (in Czech)

Human Rights

- [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)
- [Protection of Fundamental Rights in the Digital Age](#)
- [European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms](#)

Key Laws in the Czech Republic

- [Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms](#)
- [Act No. 106/1999 Coll.](#), on Free Access to Information (in Czech)
- [Act No. 123/1998 Coll.](#), on the Right to Information on the Environment (in Czech)
- [Act No. 110/2019 Coll.](#), on the Processing of Personal Data (in Czech)
- [Act No. 12/2020 Coll.](#), on the Right to Digital Services (in Czech)
- [GDPR - Regulation \(EU\) 2016/679](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data

Algorithmization and Personalization

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Data Protection and Privacy

- [Generative Artificial Intelligence and Data Privacy: A Primer](#)

- G7 data protection authorities point to key concerns over generative AI
- Generative AI and Data Privacy
- Proposal of the EU Artificial Intelligence Act
- Amendments adopted by the European Parliament on 14 June 2023 on the proposal of the Artificial Intelligence Act
- Guidelines on safeguarding privacy in the media

Secure Communications

- [Freedom of the Press Foundation](#) – Guidelines for journalists on digital security
- [Electronic Frontier Foundation](#) – Guides and tips for safer communication

Creative Commons Licence

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- [Digital Dissidents](#) (Documentary, in Czech)

People with Disabilities

- [How to talk and write about people with disabilities](#) (in Czech)
- [How to talk and write about us](#) (in Czech)
- [What is sign language, Czech Sign Language](#) (in Czech)
- [Equality Union: Disability Rights Strategy for 2021-2030](#)

Accessibility

- [How to perform a simple accessibility audit](#) – test how accessible your website is (in Czech)
- [How to write a clear official text](#) (in Czech)
- [Memorandum on accessibility of information for people with hearing impairments](#) (in Czech)

- [Poslepu.cz](#) (in Czech)
- [Accessible websites](#) (in Czech)
- [Testing website accessibility](#) – checklist of basic tests (in Czech)
- [Microsoft Inclusive Design Principles](#)
- [BBC Accessibility](#)

Useful Contacts

- [ASNEP](#) - Association of Organisations of the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and their Friends
- [luRe, Digitální svobody](#) – Non-profit organization focusing on digital and analogue rights
- [SONS](#) - United Organisation of the Blind and Partially Sighted of the Czech Republic
- [Centre Teiresiás](#) - Centre for Assistance to Students with Specific Needs, Masaryk University in Brno

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